

**Michigan Department of Agriculture**  
Laboratory Division  
**Motor Fuels Quality Program**

**Gasoline Quality: Retailer Risk Assessment Information**

The Michigan Department of Agriculture receives over 1,000 complaints against retail gasoline stations every year. Poor quality gasoline is one of the significant causes for consumer complaints. Selling substandard gasoline will make your station liable for substantial fines and/or prosecution under Michigan law.

Investigations have shown that several factors that contribute to poor quality gasoline were within the control of the station operator had they known what to look for. The Department has compiled this list of the more common factors to assist station owners in achieving and maintaining compliance with the Motor Fuels Quality standards.

**Storage tanks:**

- All fuel storage tank fills must be clearly labeled with a tag or collar to identify the contents or color-coded. If you use a color-coding system, the color-code key must be posted in a conspicuous place so it is visible to the transport driver. The color should extend beyond the lid itself to prevent switched lids. Make sure the lighting is acceptable for night deliveries. New or replacement transport drivers unfamiliar with your station could drop the wrong product into a tank. Even a small amount of mis-delivered product can result in a violation.
- Keep the storage tank fill caps, vapor return lines, and gaskets in good repair to prevent water entry. Check for rust or breakage on the vapor return poppetted dry breaks. Keep the overfill sump areas dry.
- Consider investing in a padlock to keep your product storage tanks secured against tampering or theft.
- If you have an electronic monitor for water, periodically stick your tanks with water indicating paste to check the water levels to make sure the electronic monitor is working correctly.
- **Reminder:** It is against the law to sell gasoline from storage tanks with water levels in excess of 2 inches.

**Delivery Documents:**

- Make sure your supplier knows the octane of the products you are ordering and know what you are getting. Premium comes in many octane levels.
- Keep detailed delivery documentation. Bills of lading, delivery or drop tickets, tank monitor printouts, invoices, and any other documents pertaining to gasoline delivery to your station may be your best defense if a violation occurs.
- Review the gasoline documents from your supplier for your deliveries. Drivers should be signing and fully completing the delivery tickets, including before and after stick readings.
- Review the tank monitor drop report printouts after a delivery. If you see a significantly larger or smaller delivery on the monitor printout than what the driver recorded, check further. Cross contamination of different grades of gasoline or diesel fuel with gasoline is a common violation.
- Review the certification of octane from your supplier. This certification is commonly listed on the bill of lading or delivery tickets and invoices. Make sure your pumps are labeled with the correct grade name for the octane you are receiving.
- **Reminder:** Delivery documents must be available for the department's review at the station for 30 days. Employees should know where they are kept.

**Gasoline Quality Problems:**

- If you receive a consumer complaint, observe the clarity and purity of the gasoline visually by placing it in a clean, clear jar designated just for this purpose. The gasoline must be clear and bright at 70°F and free of visible sediment. If you notice water (even a few drops), sediment, or cloudiness, take steps to correct the situation.
- If you notice or suspect that something is wrong with the product you are offering for sale, stop sale immediately until corrective action can be completed.
- If you determine that the octane is below what is posted, lowering the price is not proper corrective action. Consumers purchase octane based upon their vehicle needs. The correct grade name must be posted.
- If you need assistance to correct a problem contact your supplier, or brand parent company for assistance. You can also contact the Motor Fuels Quality program at (517) 655-8202. The department will not tell you what to do to correct a problem because this is ultimately your responsibility, but we can offer some advice or guidance recommendations to assist you in making the best decision for your business situation.
- Some of the major brands conduct random retail testing to verify the gasoline quality of their brand and will often sample if there has been a complaint. Private laboratories may also be contracted to test gasoline quality. Consider instituting your own quality assurance program and having your product tested periodically. A list of laboratories can be found at <http://www.astm.org>.
- **Reminder:** It is illegal to offer to sell or to sell gasoline that does not meet the state standards for quality. Employees should know what action to take if a problem occurs when management is not at the location.

Pump labeling:

- Keep your pumps properly labeled at all times to allow the customer to make the proper product selections. The Motor Fuels Quality Act requires that every retail gasoline dispenser has a properly placed, conspicuous, legible notice stating:

- a) That the product “MEETS MICH. QUALITY AND PURITY STANDARDS FOR” (1/4 inch type).
- b) The name of one of the state standardized grade names. (1/2 inch type).

“SUBREGULAR” for an 85 or 86 octane product  
“REGULAR” for an 87 octane product  
“MIDGRADE 88” for an 88 octane product  
“MIDGRADE 89” for an 89 octane product  
“PREMIUM” for a 90 octane product  
“PREMIUM 91” for a 91 octane product  
“PREMIUM 92” for a 92 octane product  
“PREMIUM 93” for a 93 octane product  
“PREMIUM 94” for a 94 octane product



EXAMPLE OF A LABEL (not true to size)

- c) A list of Methanol additives present in amounts of one percent or more. Example: METHANOL 5%.
- d) “CONSUMER COMPLAINTS TOLL-FREE HOTLINE” (1/8 inch type). “CALL 1-800-MDA-FUEL” (1/4 inch type).

Uppercase Helvetica, medium typeface of identical color shall be used. The notice must be placed between 34 and 78 inches from the driveway elevation on every side of the dispenser that has a price computation or quantity display panel. The grade name must be in close association with the brand name, the associated pump nozzle, or the unit price for the corresponding grade. Items a) and d) may be listed only once on each side of a multi-product dispenser provided all other requirements are met.

- Keep extra labels on hand in the event they become worn, removed, or defaced.
- All diesel fuel dispensers must be clearly and conspicuously labeled to prevent customers from dispensing diesel fuel into gasoline engine vehicles. In some cases a diesel label on the nozzle housing itself would be beneficial. A larger diameter nozzle may also be used.
- In addition to these requirements, the Federal Trade Commission requires the posting of the yellow and black Anti Knock Index (octane) stickers. The Federal Trade Commission sticker should not be in conflict with the state standardized grade name stickers.
- **Reminder:** *All* gasoline products must be labeled with the correct grade name at all times.

Price Advertising:

- Make sure the price on your roadside sign is in agreement, including the tenths of a cent, with the price displayed on the pump. Do price changes so the higher price is the one on the roadside advertisement. When the price goes up change the sign first. When the prices go down, change the dispenser first.

Pump Maintenance:

- Keep your pumps properly calibrated and in good working order. If you have a computerized blend system make sure you have the correct blend ratios for the products you are receiving. Replace worn or damaged parts, especially in blending and single hose pumps. Failed check valves can cause product contamination.
- Keep track of inventory levels and compare them to sales volumes to help identify if your blend pumps are malfunctioning. Shortages or overages in tank inventory may signal a problem.

**NOTE:** You, as the licensed retail outlet, have the final responsibility for the quality of the gasoline you sell to your customers. Maintain good records and keep those records on site for department review if requested. Monitor all deliveries made to your location. Take immediate corrective actions when a mistake occurs.

This information is not all inclusive and has been provided to assist your firm with compliance with the quality law and regulations. The Motor Fuels Quality Act can be referenced on the Internet at <http://www.michiganlegislature.org>. The standards for gasoline can be referenced on the Internet at <http://www.michigan.gov/orr>.